

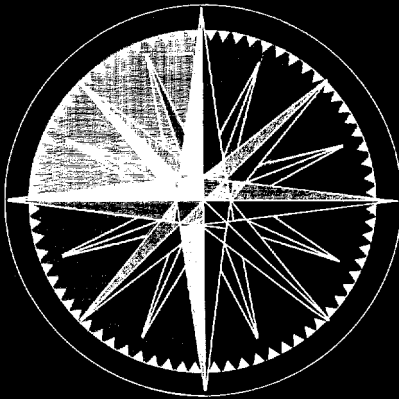
SECRET

Release 2006/08/30 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004800120004-5

30 April 1965

OCI No. 0287/65C

Copy No. 55



SPECIAL REPORT

SOVIET PROGRAM TO EXONERATE VICTIMS OF STALINIST INJUSTICE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

25X1

SECRET

GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic
downgrading and declassification

Page Denied

SECRET

30 April 1965

SOVIET PROGRAM TO EXONERATE VICTIMS OF STALINIST INJUSTICE

For the past 12 years the Soviet regime has been exonerating on a piecemeal basis some of the individuals who were accused of political crimes under Stalin. The program is apparently intended to build popular faith in the party and in Soviet justice. There is evidence, however, that it is acting instead as a reminder to many people of the manifest inadequacy of the Soviet system to avert long years of suffering and mass injustice and, by implication, calls into question the party's fitness for leadership.

Rehabilitations at All Levels

Since shortly after Stalin's death in 1953 the regime has been grinding out exonerations --or, in Soviet parlance, rehabilitations--of persons "unjustly repressed in the period of the cult of Stalin's personality." In January of this year a spokesman for the Soviet Supreme Court announced that work on this "large task" is continuing. Scarcely a week passes without an announcement that "the party has restored to the people the good name and glorious memory" of another long-dead leader. Such ceremonial rehabilitations, limited as a rule to former party officials and a few high-ranking military leaders, are an attempt to refurbish the public image of the party which has been left extremely short on heroes with the denunciation of Stalin's enemies, then of Stalin himself, of the antiparty group by Khrushchev, and most recently of Khrushchev himself.

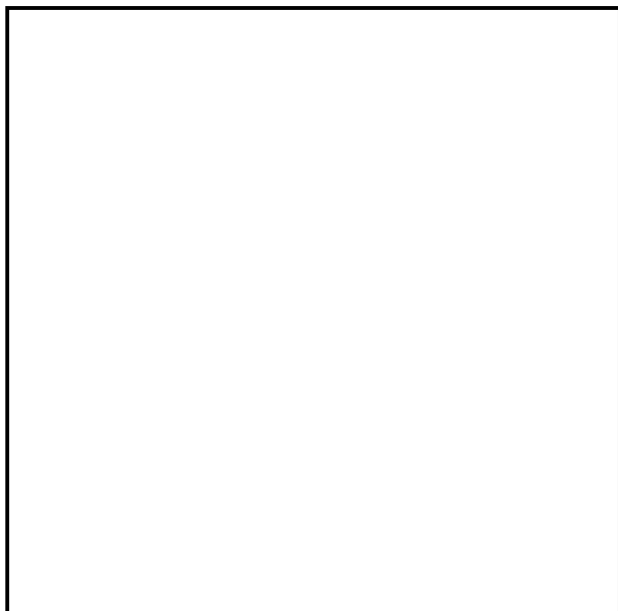
Also part of this effort to build popular faith in the party and in Soviet justice is a concurrent program of rehabilitations without publicity of less famous individuals, both party members and nonparty people. In this program, the scope of which can only be guessed at, the surviving victim or the next of kin is presented with a certificate containing the name of the victim, the date of his arrest or disappearance, and the statement that he had been "unjustly repressed." No further details are released.

Survivors apparently can return to work at the salary they were receiving at the time of arrest. Time spent in prison counts toward retirement credits. The heirs of persons who died during imprisonment are entitled to two months' salary based on the last job held by the victim before arrest. Families of those executed get pensions equal to those for workers killed on the job. The next of kin of

SECRET

SECRET

military personnel who were executed are compensated as if the men had died in line of duty. Similar regulations apparently apply for restoration of party status.



25X1

Both the ceremonial and the private rehabilitations provide the regime with a continuing contrast between the Stalin terror and the relatively safe present. However, the steady flow of announcements, the piecemeal presentation of fragmentary information, and the insistent use of euphemisms are constant reminders of the Soviet system's inability to prevent mass injustice.

Soviet intellectuals, especially those writing fiction and literary criticism, have addressed themselves with almost obsessive concern to the problems of moral guilt in a society which allowed the crimes to be committed. They have returned

persistently to the subject despite successive cultural freezes and official warnings, and their veiled questions have become steadily more insistent and more awkward for party spokesmen to deal with.

'Early Rehabilitations

The early ceremonial rehabilitations were handled inferentially, without an explicit statement of the innocence of the victim. They began within six weeks of Stalin's death with the award of an Order of Lenin to a Ukrainian party leader purged in 1938. The trials beginning in December 1953 of Beria and his immediate underlings in the secret police revealed the names of a few of their victims but provided no explanations as to the circumstances of their deaths.

During 1955, some writers who had disappeared in the 1930s as well as a few victims of the "anti-Cosmopolitan" campaign in the late 1940s against Jewish intellectuals and those "infected" by Western influences began to be favorably mentioned in public by their surviving colleagues, and a thin trickle of their works, published posthumously, became an element in the literary thaw.

At the 20th party congress in 1956, Anastas Mikoyan criticized as "historical nonsense" the hostile portrayal by Soviet historians of two Ukrainian party leaders purged in the 1930s. It marked the first time that a ranking Soviet leader

SECRET

SECRET

had publicly associated himself with the program. In his "secret speech" a week later, Khrushchev set a time span for the injustices to be redressed which, in the main, has been adhered to since. According to Khrushchev, Stalin's "mass repressions and violations of socialist legality" dated from 1 December 1934, the day before Leningrad party leader Sergey Kirov was assassinated, and continued up to the time of Stalin's death in 1953.

Khrushchev opened the way for the juridical but not political rehabilitation of "Trotskyites, Zinovievites and Bukharinites," drawing a sharp distinction between their "anti-Leninist" political views and their "unjust repression." The many names of "unjustly repressed" former leaders scattered through his speech included both accuser and accused. One had been implicated by the confessions at the 1938 trial of Stalin's early rival, Bukharin; another had denounced one of Bukharin's co-defendants, only to fall himself in a later purge. Khrushchev also referred to "Stalin's annihilation of many military commanders from 1937 to 1941.

Military rehabilitations began promptly the following month. By 1957 the ceremonial list for the military had been completed. Additional military rehabilitations since 1957 have been drawn mainly from the four-year period suggested by Khrushchev--1937 to 1941--or are those of a few high-ranking of-

icers missing in World War II and falsely accused of desertion.

The rehabilitations of former party leaders have been equally piecemeal and uninformative. The majority have been those purged in the 1930s, but less publicized victims from the late 1940s and early 1950s have also been rehabilitated.

The great "show trials" of the 1930s have only been obliquely touched on. A few of the lesser known defendants have been ceremonially rehabilitated, but this was done without reference to the trials themselves. In 1962 there were reports that the families of the major defendants in the "show trials" had been secretly notified that the dead men had been exonerated of the criminal charges against them. There was no implication of tolerance for their political views.

Established Pattern

After the 22nd congress in 1961, a ritual for ceremonial rehabilitations was established. A brief biography in a memorial article on a convenient decade birthday--50th, 70th, or even 90th--reviews the loyalty and virtues of the deceased leader. As a rule the subject is described as having "fallen victim to unjust repression during the period of the Stalin personality cult." Occasionally the phrasing is blunter--"he was shot" or the impersonal "they shot him."

A few rehabilitations have received special handling.

SECRET

SECRET

In one case, different dates for the victim's fall in otherwise similar memorial articles in Pravda and Izvestia suggested Khrushchev's own involvement as a complicating factor. In the memorial article in December 1963 on Nikolay Voznesensky, Malenkov was specifically charged with responsibility for his fall, and the policy views attributed to Voznesensky as a "remarkably brilliant" economic planner were clearly related to economic policy problems current in 1963. Another article described the differing views held by Marshal Tukhachevsky and Kliment Voroshilov, commissar for defense from 1934 to 1940. Such glimpses of policy disagreements are rare, however.

Stalin's Accomplices

The first "official" explanation for the crimes of the Stalin era--that they were due to weaknesses in Stalin's personal character--was clearly incomplete. In his "secret speech" Khrushchev's short list of Stalin's accomplices was limited, with two exceptions, to former officials of the secret police. Beria, in charge of the secret police from late 1938 until shortly after Stalin's death, bore most of the blame for the crimes. All other party leaders--living and dead--were portrayed as Stalin's victims or potential victims rather than his accomplices.

In this speech, which has never been published in the Soviet Union although parts of its contents are widely known

among the Soviet population, Khrushchev himself raised the questions which still haunt the party: "Where were the members of the politburo? Why did they not assert themselves in time against the cult of personality?" He noted that a party commission had been established to report to the leaders on "what made possible" the mass injustices of the 1930s. His account of its activities suggested, however, that it had confined its efforts to compiling facts and figures rather than attempting any political analysis of the factors which made the crimes possible. In the end Khrushchev gave his own explanation--a very human one but scarcely calculated to engender confidence in either the leaders or the system: we did not know about the crimes and we were ourselves in danger.

In the ensuing months the name of Stalin's legal tsar, Vyshinsky, began to be linked with Stalin's in connection with "mistakes" in legal theory, but until this winter he was not as a rule treated as an accomplice in the crimes themselves.

After the fall of the anti-party group in 1957 there was a brief flurry of public charges blaming Malenkov for the still unexplained "Leningrad affair" of 1949. They were not followed up, however, and did not become part of any official formula until 1961.

At the 22nd congress in 1961, all the members of the

SECRET

SECRET

1957 antiparty group were charged with complicity in Stalin's mass murders. Malenkov's responsibility for the "Leningrad Affair" was revived and a reference was made to "crass violations of revolutionary legality" in Leningrad in 1952--a reference which has yet to be elucidated.

Last year party secretary Suslov, addressing the central committee on the problem of Chinese objections to the denigration of Stalin and the antiparty group, revived the charges against Molotov, Kaganovich, and Malenkov, singling out Molotov for having urged death sentences for the wives of "a large group of repressed workers."

This increase in the number of accomplices has credibility on its side. However, it implies an improbable picture of the rest of the leadership, especially Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and Suslov, who had presumably seen, spoken, and heard no evil during the 20 years when Stalin and their close colleagues had murdered "thousands of completely innocent people." Although judicial retribution was hinted at during the 1961 congress, no action appears to have been taken.

The ceremonial rehabilitations have not as a rule reflected these additions to the list of Stalin's accomplices. Most are still attributed to the impersonal unidentified forces of the "arbitrariness of the period of the cult of personality."

Shifts in the Formula

As the literary questions concerning the moral responsibility of those who saw and failed to oppose injustice have become more pointed, there have been indications of recognition that both leaders and the institution of the party itself are vulnerable on this issue. In the winter of 1963 during a bitter public quarrel among the intellectuals over whether Stalin's crimes had been widely known at the time, Izvestia hastily produced a unique vignette portraying Khrushchev's intervention during the war to save a Soviet colonel from being framed by Beria's agents. Khrushchev himself in March 1963 claimed that he had not known that innocent people were being arrested but in almost the same breath claimed to have personally averted two purges planned by Stalin. The announcement of the rehabilitation of the Communist Party of the western Ukraine was accompanied by fulsome praise for Khrushchev's efforts "to do all he could to save the cadres" in that area.

Friends of Lenin's widow explained carefully in an article in Izvestia that although she knew what was happening, she felt that the good of the cause would be best served by protecting Lenin's "heritage," rather than attempting to save innocent lives. Later articles justified her silence on the grounds that she herself was in "difficult circumstances."

SECRET

SECRET

In 1964, ceremonial rehabilitations began to reflect regime efforts to "prove" that attempts had been made to oppose Stalin's injustice. An anniversary article on Leningrad party leader Sergey Kirov implied that at the time of his assassination in 1934 he had planned to try to oust Stalin. Rehabilitations of party leaders and of a few military leaders "revealed" that the dead officials had protested to Stalin concerning the "repressions." The first rehabilitation of a defector--F. F. Raskolnikov--was announced and the ceremonial article made explicit the point that he had fled to Paris and from there written an open letter of protest to Stalin in 1939. This rehabilitation was apparently so controversial that it had to be publicly justified six months later. In an article in *Izvestia* last September, the "political commissar" for the navy insisted that Raskolnikov's public protest from Paris, far from being treason as charged, "did him honor."

Most of the protests were allegedly made to save friends or colleagues. A few, however, were said to have been made because of differences over policy. Several involved protests of "too hasty" collectivization in agriculture, another involved Stalin's "erroneous" wage policies. With only two minor exceptions, however, no living Soviet leader has been involved in any stories of protests against Stalin's crimes.

Ceremonial rehabilitations have also recently begun to refer to the victim's being "slandered," implying a level of responsibility below Stalin and Beria. An unusual case last fall referred to a "provocateur" who had "slandered" the victim and risen to more responsible jobs, but had finally met a richly deserved but unspecified fate. A curious article last November reviewed the legal penalties for false accusation, juxtaposing this information with a summary of the Soviet laws authorizing rehabilitations, "even posthumously."

Nor, unexpectedly, have ceremonial rehabilitations in the security organs been rare. Beginning with the revelations last September of Richard Sorge's espionage feats, however, there has been a series of ceremonial rehabilitations of former members of military intelligence. Many of these dead heroes are referred to in such a way as to blur the distinction between military intelligence personnel and the regular secret police. It is not clear whether this campaign is intended to reflect credit on the military or the security forces, or both.

Khrushchev's ouster had no discernible effect on the rehabilitation program. A senior Soviet novelist has predicted that Soviet writers will be writing about the "cult" for the next 80 years. Even the war, the other great traumatic experience of the Soviet people,

SECRET

SECRET

tends to be viewed through the prism of the cult. The mixture of pride and bitterness surrounding those years is epitomized in a recent short story concerning a Soviet soldier who escaped from a German POW camp and fought bravely with the French Maquis. Returning home at the close of the war, the victorious hero was forthwith arrested on charges of having been infected with Western influences, and was sent to a Soviet labor camp. The author did not need to point

out the similarity of the two camps. As long as the regime continues its rehabilitation program it will be providing additional material for the intelligentsia, who can be expected to continue asking difficult questions concerning guilt for those years. Under their questioning, the line between "justified" and "unjustified" opposition to established authority may become a difficult one for the regime to draw. 25X1

25X1

* * *

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET